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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0819
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 2454
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 2844
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 2229
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE IMMEDIATE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL CHIEF OF STAFF SADRYKULOV: FROM
HORSE WHIPERER TO BARBARIAN HANDLER

Classified By: Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) On March 17, Presidential Chief of Staff Medet Sadyrkulov invited Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Pamela Spratlen, Ambassador and DCM to dinner at 12 Chimneys, a restaurant in the mountains outside of Bishkek. The evening provided some insight into Sadyrkulov, perhaps the most powerful man in the country after President Bakiyev.

¶2. (C) Demands control; wants to impress: As soon as Sadyrkulov entered the restaurant, he took control: ordering that another table be moved closer to the fireplace for us, that more logs be placed on the fire, and that French wines be brought to the table. When the waiter presented two French wines to choose from, Sadyrkulov looked perplexed, then selected one at random. He clearly believed that ordering French wines would impress, but that seemed to be the limit of his knowledge of wine. The table had the usual variety of salads, which were followed by multiple courses of fish and meat that were all pre-ordered. Sadyrkulov, nevertheless, expansively ordered other items off the menu that he thought his guests might like.

¶3. (C) Barbarian Handler: Sadyrkulov told us that he is an excellent rider, and in his youth broke in wild horses until he suffered an accident, which left him with a limp. He said that he was successful, because he approached the horses with his head down, humbly. As he manipulates the political scene, we've seen Sadyrkulov use this tactic successfully with opposition members, civil society, and foreigners. Clearly this horse whisperer has moved up from horses to work his way with people.

¶4. (C) Step by step: One of Sadyrkulov's favorite expressions is "step by step" or "phased," (poetapno) usually said in English, to remind us that reform cannot be hurried, that change takes time. Sadyrkulov said that he didn't have electricity in his hometown of Kemin before he was in grade school and remembers doing his homework by the light of a lantern. If it took that long to get electricity, he noted, progress takes time.

15. (C) Bishkek is a Little America: When he was Ambassador to Tehran, Sadyrkulov sent a group of Iranian businessmen to Bishkek. They returned impressed by the lively, open Kyrgyz capitol, and told Sadyrkulov that Bishkek is a "little America." Sadyrkulov tells this story often, to underline that we may be impatient with the pace of reform, but fundamentally there are more similarities than differences between our two countries.

16. (C) Never cross Sadyrkulov: Sadyrkulov is not shy about sharing stories about those who have double-crossed him and how he has settled the score. He has not forgiven Kulov for abandoning him when Sadyrkulov was charged with corruption by former General Procurator Beknazarov and dealt with Kulov forcefully when he tried to use demonstrations to force Bakiyev from power. However, now that Kulov is not participating in politics, Sadyrkulov said he is trying to help him and other opposition leaders. He seemed to want to demonstrate that he can be magnanimous -- when he has the upper hand.

17. (C) Keep your Enemies Closer: Former Central Banker Ulan Sarbanov was also charged at the same time as Sadyrkulov, but unlike Sadyrkulov, who landed on his feet as soon as he was acquitted, Sarbanov still can't find work. When we asked why, Sadyrkulov chuckled and said that he (Sadyrkulov) was a politician, people were afraid to keep him out in the cold.

18. (C) The Ultimate Realist: Sadyrkulov said he would never be President due to "nuances," so he, therefore, didn't want to be President. He also said he would not want to be Prime Minister. His place, he said, is in the shadows,

influencing events. (Comment: Sadyrkulov did not elaborate on the nuances, but it is rumored that he is ethnically Kazakh, which, if true, would torpedo any presidential ambitions. Another reason, might be the many enemies he has accrued during his years at the center of Kyrgyz politics, first as former President Akayev's Chief of Staff, and now as President Bakiyev's. End Comment.)

19. (C) Ready to charm by sharing Kyrgyz culture: At the beginning of the evening, Sadyrkulov had arrived uncharacteristically late, with his hair disheveled and wet. He explained that he had stopped off at a nearby mountain spring to drink the waters, said to have healing qualities, and bathe his face, something he does whenever he is very tired and needs to decompress. After dinner, Sadyrkulov led his guests up the road through the dark night to the spring, so we, too, could partake of this "magical" Kyrgyz ritual.
YOVANOVITCH